United Nations E/2017/SR.48 (B)

# Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
6 September 2017

Original: English

**2017 session**
28 July 2016-27 July 2017
High-level segment

**Summary record of the 48th meeting (Chamber B)**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 20 July 2017, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Barros Melet (Vice-President) (Chile)

## Contents

Agenda item 5: High-level segment (continued)

(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council (continued)

*General debate (continued)*

This record is subject to corrections.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent as soon as possible to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org).

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

17-12158 (E)

Please recycle

*In the absence of Mr. Shava (Zimbabwe), Mr. Barros Melet (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Agenda item 5: High-level segment** (*continued*) (E/2017/33, E/2017/64, E/2017/66, E/2017/69 and E/2017/72)

**(a) Ministerial meeting of the high-level political forum on sustainable development, convened under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council** (*continued*) (A/71/976-E/2017/79)

*General debate (continued)*

1. **The President** invited the ministerial meeting to resume its general debate on the theme "Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world".

2. **Mr. Kononuchenko** (Russian Federation), Deputy Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, said that the Russian Federation was dedicated to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions. His delegation therefore wished to draw attention to the problem of the working poor. According to the report of the Secretary-General on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (E/2017/66), just under 10 per cent of the world's workers were living with their families on less than $1.90 per person per day. In least developed countries, that number was nearly 38 per cent. That situation undermined incentives for productive employment, which were essential to achieving sustainable development. Given the differences in socioeconomic systems and human development indices and the uneven achievements made under the Millennium Development Goals, the international community should draw on the experiences of individual States and international organizations, such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), in order to find diverse solutions to the problems facing the working poor.

3. In that regard, the Russian Federation was willing to share its experiences in eliminating the root causes of poverty among the working population. It had consistently implemented measures to ensure fair remuneration and foster a decent work environment. The Government had also actively involved the private sector in the wake of new non-standard forms of employment, increased mobility in some sectors and evolving labour relations. During the International High-level Conference on Decent Work, held in Moscow in 2012, States from Central Asia, the Middle East and the Commonwealth of Independent States had signed a multilateral donor agreement with a view to implementing a coordinated strategy for vocational training. From 2012 to 2014, Russia had allocated $8 million towards that goal. Additionally, the Russian oil company Lukoil and ILO had signed a partnership agreement to promote private funding for ILO projects.

4. It was completely unacceptable to politicize the work of the forum, as the representative of Ukraine had done. The unfounded allegations made against Russia by Ukraine were merely an attempt to provide excuses for its unwillingness to take action towards leaving no one behind in territory that was not under its control.

5. **Mr. Pinheiro** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that decent work was essential to achieving a world without poverty and hunger, and ILO stood ready to assist States in delivering on their commitments. The Global Partnership for Universal Social Protection and the multi-stakeholder partnership on social protection floors were fundamental to achieving a world free of poverty. With regard to the gender pay gap, a coalition to promote equal pay for work of equal value would be launched in September 2017 to bring together Governments, businesses, workers and other stakeholders. ILO had also launched an initiative to help shape the future of work and to understand and respond effectively to the challenges related to major transformations stemming from innovative technology.

6. It was encouraging to see the unprecedented level of engagement from business, trade unions and other major groups in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its review at the national and international levels. ILO and its intergovernmental and tripartite bodies remained fully engaged in the Sustainable Development Goals review process. In March 2017, the ILO Governing Body had hosted a special session to discuss decent work, in particular issues related to social protection, informality, social dialogue and the promotion of fundamental rights at work.

7. **Ms. Martin** (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) said that more than half of the world's population was still offline and unable to benefit from information and communications technology (ICT). Nevertheless, voluntary national reviews had featured ICT more prominently in 2017, and many States had reported progress in areas such as digital inclusion, digital literacy, smart cities, digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, data collection, youth, gender, agriculture and financial inclusion. Some States had reported that inadequate ICT infrastructure was a

significant impediment to economic growth and poverty alleviation.

8. ICT could therefore play an important role in eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world. In that regard, the ITU report "Fast-forward progress: leveraging tech to achieve the global goals" examined the ways in which ICT could be applied to support the mandates of United Nations funds, programmes, specialized agencies and related organizations, and their achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. ITU had also submitted the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society Forum to the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

9. A number of States had stressed the need for multi-stakeholder partnerships to assist in transitioning to a digital future. ITU had recently partnered with ILO and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization to promote digital skills and drive collaboration.

10. **Ms. Bozkurt** (Observer for the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) said that although many Member States had placed greater emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals that aligned with their national priorities, it was important to recognize the role of interlinkages in achieving those Goals. For example, the full and effective participation of women in leadership roles at all levels of the decision-making process in political, economic and public life was essential to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

11. The achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, required a participatory and inclusive approach that engaged all stakeholders, including national legislatures and civil society organizations, as well as institutions providing independent analysis and assessment of government action related to the targets of the Goals.

12. **Mr. Sinirlioğlu** (Turkey), Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations, said that the development model in Turkey was human-centred and focused on economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. The Government had made important achievements in poverty eradication, job creation, income distribution, social protection and access to basic services and rights, such as education, health, water, sanitation, electricity and housing. Moderate poverty in rural and urban settings had been significantly reduced. Efforts to promote the empowerment of women focused on removing economic, social and cultural boundaries and promoting their participation in the development process, the workforce and decision-making. Development policies and programmes also targeted children, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

13. Turkey had presented its voluntary national review in 2016. The Government had since been conducting a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. It would report on the progress made in the realization of each Sustainable Development Goal and compare national achievements with those of States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the Group of 20 and the European Union. The results would be used to identify gaps in the legal and institutional frameworks, indicators, capacity and resources in order to update policies and programmes. In parallel, the subsequent national development plan was being prepared with the Goals in mind. Furthermore, the national development commission would be reorganized with robust stakeholder engagement.

14. The Sustainable Development Goals could not be achieved without strengthened global partnerships to mobilize the necessary means of implementation. Official development assistance (ODA) played a critical role in that regard, especially in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and African States. Turkey had therefore increased its ODA to $6.2 billion, exceeding the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income.

15. **Ms. De Bolt** (International Civil Aviation Organization) said that air transportation was a catalyst for global connectivity, economic growth and social development. It was vital to delivering humanitarian aid and responding to public health emergencies. The civil aviation sector was a cornerstone of the global economy, providing transportation for 3.5 billion passengers per year and transporting one third of global trade by value. Air traffic was projected to double by 2030, placing greater pressure on Member States and the industry to ensure safe, efficient, secure, economically viable and environmentally sound air transportation systems, which were fundamental to the realization of the Sustainable Development Goals, especially in least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States.

16. The international community must assist States in liberalizing air transportation and closing the infrastructure gap. Member States were therefore

encouraged to prioritize aviation in their national development plans and report on that sector in their voluntary national reviews. Furthermore, Governments, financial institutions, the industry and other stakeholders must commit adequate funding to sustainable aviation development. Through the Aviation Partnerships for Sustainable Development initiative, the International Civil Aviation Organization and its partners raised awareness of aviation's contribution to sustainable development and promoted the benefits of investing in the sector.

17. **Mr. Maseli** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that States and regions that had successfully developed their manufacturing sectors had made significant progress in poverty reduction. Inclusive and sustainable industrial development was essential to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 9, on technology, innovation and infrastructure, and cut across many other Goals. For example, it enabled sustained economic growth and the creation of decent jobs and incomes; helped to reduce poverty, hunger and inequality within and among States; promoted gender equality; improved health and well-being; and increased resource and energy efficiency.

18. Despite those benefits, the poorest States had struggled to pursue industrialization and structural transformation. At the current pace, Goal 9 was unlikely to be achieved by 2030, which would also lessen the chances of eradicating poverty. Productivity remained low, and manufacturing employment still represented a relatively small share of total employment in many States. In order to accelerate progress in structural transformation, which was critical to poverty reduction, developing countries must overcome those challenges by increasing their industrial capacity, gaining access to appropriate technology, building capacity to address environmental issues and attracting more investment. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization would continue to develop partnerships to mobilize resources and work with the United Nations system and the international community to assist States in overcoming challenges in industrialization in order to fulfil their commitments.

19. **Ms. Mucavi** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that, for the first time in many years, the significant progress made towards ending hunger might be in jeopardy, as food security was threatened by climate change, conflict, a lack of appropriate policies and insufficient investment. Approximately 20 million people were at high risk of famine, and millions more were experiencing severe food insecurity. In order to achieve the targets under Sustainable Development Goal 2, on zero hunger, there must be a shift towards more sustainable, resilient, inclusive and productive food and agriculture systems. In addition, rural communities must be included in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Approximately 80 per cent of the world's extreme poor lived in rural areas, and most of the food was produced by smallholder family farmers, who, in addition to fishermen, pastoralists and indigenous peoples, must be recognized as drivers of sustainable development and receive the necessary support.

20. Political commitments must be translated into concrete actions through comprehensive, country-specific policies and programmes supported by inclusive multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms. There was an urgent need to implement and scale up sustainable solutions, respond to the current humanitarian food crisis and build resilience. A zero hunger world could be achieved only through concerted efforts by all stakeholders at all levels.

21. **Ms. Menabde** (World Health Organization) said that the international community must ensure the right of every individual to basic health services in order to make progress in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Universal health coverage, under target 3.8, was essential to achieving Goal 3, on good health and well-being, and others such as Goal 1, on ending poverty. Universal health coverage, which meant that all people received necessary health services without facing financial hardship, required investments to guarantee a people-centred approach based on robust primary care. Globally, more than 400 million people still lacked access to basic services, and at least 100 million people were pushed into poverty every year because they had to pay for their own health care. Universal health coverage was the best investment that States could make to defend against outbreaks and other health emergencies, such as antimicrobial resistance. The international community must also work to improve the health, dignity and rights of all women and girls, which was the focus of Goal 5. Healthy, empowered women and girls had the potential to build stronger communities and transform society.

22. The World Health Organization was helping States to examine and address the impacts of climate change and air pollution on health. Climate change jeopardized clean air, safe water, secure shelter and food security. It also altered the geographic range and seasonality of infectious diseases, such as dengue and malaria, and made extreme weather events more common, causing more complex emergencies.

However, the greatest challenge to public health was the steady rise of non-communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular diseases and mental health issues. Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals related to air quality, energy, nutrition, human settlements and transportation could help to combat those problems. The achievement of the Goals required an intersectoral approach in order to break down silos and draw on the strengths of partners beyond the health sector, in areas such as finance, energy, infrastructure, education, labour and transportation.

23. **Mr. Khan** (World Tourism Organization) said that tourism was one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the world economy and could play an important role in eradicating poverty. It had become one of the main drivers of economic growth, export earnings and job creation in a large number of developing countries, including least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries. Tourism helped to diversify local economies and create business opportunities and jobs for the poor. It represented more than 10 per cent of global gross domestic product, 7 per cent of exports, 30 per cent of export services and one of every eleven jobs worldwide. The industry had shown consistent dynamism, diversification and resilience, growing at an annual rate of 4 to 6 per cent each year, and was estimated to grow by 50 per cent, to 1.8 billion international arrivals, by 2030. Sustainable and responsible tourism could contribute greatly to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, and the World Tourism Organization worked actively and in close cooperation with all stakeholders and the tourism industry to that end.

24. **Ms. Durant** (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that UNCTAD was increasing its support to States to ensure inclusive cross-border trade, investment, finance and technology in order to reverse the trends that had held back progress on Goal 1, especially for the poorest countries. It had recently launched the Trade and Gender Toolbox in an effort to ensure that women enjoyed the economic opportunities provided by trade, in line with Goal 5. Moreover, in line with Goal 9, UNCTAD supported States in bridging the digital divide and ensuring the fair distribution of the benefits of science and technology. Goal 14, on healthy oceans, was particularly crucial for the inclusive prosperity of small island developing States and coastal communities. At its fourteenth session, held in Nairobi in 2016, UNCTAD, along with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the United Nations Environment Programme, had adopted a road map to end harmful fishing subsidies. More than 91 States had joined those efforts.

25. In the current global context, multilateralism was criticized, the world was suffering from divisive conflict and environmental degradation, and there was rising indignation among those whom prosperity had left behind. The full achievement of Goal 17 was therefore urgent and necessary, and UNCTAD stood ready to support the international community in revitalizing global partnerships.

26. **Ms. Avtyan** (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS) said that, according to its most recent report (E/2017/62), significant progress was being made towards ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030. More than half of all people living with HIV had access to antiretroviral treatment, and AIDS-related deaths had been nearly halved since 2005. However, many challenges still needed to be addressed. Approximately 30 per cent of people living with HIV were unaware of their HIV status, and more than 17 million people did not have access to treatment. While new HIV infections were declining globally, the pace was not sufficient to meet the 2030 deadline. In fact, infections were rising in some regions and States, and among key populations. Young people were at high risk, especially young women in sub-Saharan Africa. In 2016, there had been approximately 610,000 new HIV infections among young people, 59 per cent of which had occurred among women.

27. Despite the remarkable progress made, the AIDS epidemic required continued commitment and action to fast-track the response. The AIDS response was interlinked with and dependent on the progress made in various Sustainable Development Goals, such as eradicating poverty, promoting food security and eliminating gender inequality and violence. The epidemic could not be ended without addressing the broader socioeconomic determinants of health. The substantial experience of institutions employing a multisectoral, multi-stakeholder, people-centred and rights-based response was invaluable to finding solutions to meet the Goals. To that end, the Programme was championing an initiative supported by the African Union to recruit 2 million community health workers in Africa, which would be crucial to ending the AIDS epidemic and would help to bolster the capacity of health systems, promote universal health coverage, create jobs, reduce poverty and encourage economic development.

28. **Ms. Cueva**, speaking on behalf of the major group for women, said that gender inequality was one

of the most pervasive inequalities, as evidenced by the number of women living in poverty and the discriminatory laws and policies targeting them, such as unequal inheritance and the criminalization of abortion. Unsustainable industrial agriculture and fisheries models pushed women out of those industries, and essential services for women and girls were being reduced. Transformative actions were needed to bring about systemic change, empower women and girls, and realize their human rights.

29. The 2030 Agenda recognized, protected and realized the universal human rights of all women and girls, including the right to education, housing, water and sanitation, food, decent work and living wages, and sexual and reproductive health. The international community must safeguard and enhance civil society space to promote the participation of women at all levels, fully protect the lives of environmental and human rights defenders and end impunity. There was a need for rights-based actions that established a connection between the environment and gender equality. Extractivist, capitalist and fossil-fuel-based models of production and consumption valued growth and profit over sustainability and the equal distribution of resources. Governments should prioritize public investment in social protection programmes to reduce and redistribute the unpaid domestic and care work of women. There must be financing to support development and women's rights groups. The international community must promote the autonomy and meaningful participation of women and girls of all ages, especially vulnerable groups of women living in poverty.

30. The high-level political forum was at risk of falling short of its mandate to ensure accountability and was not capitalizing on the opportunity to increase commitments under the 2030 Agenda. She looked forward to the forum becoming a place to address structural barriers and find solutions to better achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

31. **Ms. Dhlakama**, speaking on behalf of the major group for children and youth, said that children and youth were extremely vulnerable to poverty but were also actively engaged in addressing the structural violence that created poverty, inequality and inequity. The scarcity of data on young people living in poverty obscured the degree to which they were affected by the structural and systemic causes of poverty, but young people were clearly marginalized as a result of ageism, gender discrimination, underdeveloped health-care systems and business practices that promoted individual prosperity at the expense of rights-holders. Neoliberal macroeconomic structures that led to exclusion and commodified people and the planet must be reformed in order to promote true prosperity and eradicate poverty.

32. While Governments were the primary duty-bearers for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, her major group was contributing through a strategy based on advocacy, capacity-building, youth action and knowledge creation. Youth organizations could play a key role in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals if given the opportunity, and their participation in implementation and monitoring at the local, national and international levels should therefore be strengthened and encouraged.

33. Achievement of the Goals would require States to have sufficient resources to conduct voluntary national reviews. Those funds could be mobilized through a stronger global tax system that allocated sufficient resources to sustainable development. It was also important to develop financing systems that provided universal income and capped maximum income. Furthermore, policy frameworks developed at the United Nations level must be coherently integrated into national implementation plans. The international community should honour the sacrifices young people were making for the sake of sustainable development by establishing institutional mechanisms to promote meaningful youth participation. She welcomed the paragraph on youth in the ministerial declaration of the high-level political forum and urged delegations to implement it fully.

34. **Ms. Sperkova** (IOGT International) said that children, youth, women and persons with mental health problems were extremely vulnerable to the vicious cycle of discrimination, deprivation and poverty, which was often fuelled by alcohol and other drugs. Alcohol was the leading risk factor for death and disability among persons between the ages of 15 and 49, and harm caused by alcohol had an adverse impact on the areas covered by 13 of the Sustainable Development Goals. Investment in health and well-being was effective and brought economic benefits. Moreover, it would not be possible to eradicate poverty and achieve prosperity for all unless the realities and fundamental rights of those currently being left behind, in particular women and girls, were at the forefront of efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda.

35. IOGT welcomed the reiteration of the need to strengthen the prevention and treatment of substance abuse in the ministerial declaration and, in that connection, called for the implementation of evidence-based and cost-effective alcohol policies, such as alcohol taxation, to further the achievement of the

Goals. Curbing the unethical practices of the alcohol industry was also of strategic importance. Evidence supported the case for addressing the problem of alcohol, and the necessary policy tools were in place. All that was lacking was the political will to take the necessary action to make the world a better place.

36. **Mr. Sapit**, speaking on behalf of the major group for indigenous peoples, said that indigenous peoples, one of the groups that was currently being left the furthest behind, had been engaging with sustainable development processes in good faith. They should be given legal recognition as a distinct group holding the rights set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. In particular, the recognition and protection of the lands, territories and resources of indigenous peoples, who accounted for 15 per cent of the world's poor, was necessary in order to eradicate poverty and hunger and ensure their well-being. Indigenous peoples led low-carbon lifestyles and engaged in the sustainable management and conservation of natural resources through traditional knowledge and innovation. However, those significant contributions to sustainable development were not acknowledged or supported.

37. There was also a need for policy cohesion based on a holistic, integrated and human rights-based approach to sustainable development, and for balanced implementation of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals. That would involve implementing policy reforms to eliminate discrimination, ensuring the transparency and accountability of States and corporations, entrenching social justice and equality and respecting fundamental rights and freedoms. Sustainable development could not be achieved when activists defending the environment, land and human rights were being killed and when community action was met with military action and human rights violations.

38. Effective mechanisms should be established to enable the full and meaningful participation of indigenous peoples and other marginalized groups at all levels. The so-called multi-stakeholder forums, which should facilitate open, inclusive and transparent consultations and include the views, needs and aspirations of rights-holders in planning, implementation and reporting, were dominated by the business sector and large non-governmental organizations that did not represent rights-holders. The fact that certain Asian States were not permitting the free expression of the independent views of major groups in their voluntary national reviews was also a matter of concern.

39. Data used to monitor the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals should be disaggregated by ethnicity and indicate the rate of participation of indigenous peoples. Identifying achievements, gaps and challenges would help to ensure that indigenous peoples were visible and taken into account in the implementation process. His major group stood ready to cooperate and contribute to the implementation of data disaggregation, which it understood could pose difficulties for States. However, Member States were urged to adopt strong and action-oriented outcome documents of the high-level political forum that did more than reiterate the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda.

40. **Mr. Shea** (IUS PRIMI VIRI International Association) said that the Council must continue to focus on social justice and human rights in order to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Human rights were sometimes incorrectly viewed as being limited to matters such as torture, or seen as a concern for prosperous nations alone. In contrast, the concept of social justice, which focused on issues such as gender equality, health and well-being, hunger and poverty, was more widely accepted, and was particularly appealing to young people.

41. Poverty should be viewed as a structural phenomenon rather than a product of luck, fate or the choices of individuals living in poverty. It was also important to see it as a problem that could be solved through social and economic change, not an inevitable state to which those experiencing it should adapt. It was worth noting that most people in the world underestimated global levels of social and economic inequality, were unaware of their relative standing and viewed inequality as an inevitable result of capitalism and globalization.

42. **Ms. Then Marte**, speaking on behalf of the major group for non-governmental organizations, said that non-governmental organizations were committed to participating in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and contributing their experience and methodologies in order to make sustainable development an inclusive effort. The United Nations and its Member States should create a favourable environment for the participation of civil society in implementation and evaluation activities related to the Sustainable Development Goals at the national, regional and global levels, including by abandoning restrictive policies that sought to limit the operating space available to civil society organizations and restrict their power to manage resources. To promote transparency and accountability, Member States should request the Department of Economic and Social Affairs

to publish online all parallel reports produced by the major groups.

43. Her major group was concerned about the financing of the 2030 Agenda and hoped to see a clear commitment to the mobilization of resources. To enable least developed countries, small island developing States and middle-income countries to make progress, the international community must meet the established ODA targets and engage in effective development cooperation. It was also necessary to adopt progressive tax policies and ensure that the activities of financial institutions promoted the achievement of the Goals. She welcomed the submission of all voluntary national reviews and commended the States that had included civil society in their review processes. The institutional, environmental, territorial and economic challenges faced by Member States provided good motivation for the continuation of efforts to bring about structural change with a view to achieving equality and justice and ensuring that no one was left behind.

44. **Mr. Chelluri** (International Committee for Peace and Reconciliation) said that poverty was the state of lacking the basic necessities required for a minimum acceptable standard of living, in particular as the result of the absence of a regular income. Innocent victims could be pushed into poverty by circumstances beyond their control. Poverty diminished the capability of persons to live the types of lives to which they aspired. Its many manifestations included hunger, malnutrition, inadequate education, unhealthy living conditions, inadequate physical security and the lack of participation in social activities.

45. There was widespread awareness that the eradication of poverty would be beneficial for the whole of society. However, there was no indication that the rich were ready to give economic justice to the poor. The economic future of the world was controlled by 1 per cent of the global population, who owned more than the remaining 99 per cent. Social injustice, slavery, the destruction of the environment, war, poverty and economic disasters were all problems that were caused by humans, and could therefore be prevented by them. It was possible to build a society where people lived without fear, where peace and justice prevailed and where the poor were not exploited. Those who refused to work towards that aim would be left behind.

46. **Mr. Ahmad** (United Nations Environment Programme) said that environmental problems such as drought, pollution and rapid and poorly planned urbanization disproportionately affected the poorest populations and contributed to the vicious cycle of poverty and disease. Around 13 million persons, 90 per cent of whom lived in low- or middle-income countries, died every year from environment-related illnesses. Unless action was taken, those problems would increase exponentially as populations grew. Moreover, around 70 per cent of the world's poor depended on natural resources for all or part of their livelihoods, which would be wiped out if ecosystems were destroyed by pollution and waste. If the international community was truly committed to eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity, it must recognize the true social and economic value of the environment and embrace the many simple and sustainable environmental management tools available. Leveraging the environment to improve health and reduce pollution created wider socioeconomic benefits. For example, the trillions of dollars spent on welfare every year as a result of air pollution could be invested in education, infrastructure and innovation to create jobs and enhance prosperity. The purpose of environmental protection was to maintain the quality of natural resources and ensure that they were shared fairly, so that they could contribute to a healthy and prosperous future for all.

47. **Ms. De Witt** (International Federation of Medical Students' Associations) said that the poor were particularly vulnerable to a number of health risks. Non-communicable diseases were responsible for 69 per cent of deaths worldwide, and more than three quarters of those deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries. The wealthy tended to be better equipped to avoid risk factors such as smoking, harmful alcohol consumption, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity. Poor health could cause people to fall into poverty if they had to pay for medical care but were unable to work. That vicious cycle of poverty and ill health undermined socioeconomic development and threatened the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Measures to prevent and control non-communicable diseases were therefore a sound economic investment. Universal affordable health care would also be key to breaking the cycle.

48. **Mr. Sanna**, speaking on behalf of the major group for workers and trade unions, said that the Sustainable Development Goals were relevant to trade unions because decent work was a driver of sustainable development. It provided a livelihood for workers and their families, reduced inequality, empowered women, narrowed the gender pay gap and guaranteed compliance with core labour standards. Poverty eradication would require access to decent work that was fairly compensated as well as comprehensive

social protection systems and floors. To achieve gender equality, it would be necessary to transform labour markets so that women's paid and unpaid work was appropriately recognized. The pursuit of gender equality must also involve measures to enable workers to balance their work and family lives. Governments and businesses must also enforce appropriate occupational health and safety standards, so that workers were able to lead healthy and productive lives. Sustainable industrialization would require a massive transformation in the functioning of economies and industries. In particular, environmental, social and economic policy goals must be established to ensure a just transition for workers. It was also important to provide sufficient public financial support for efforts to eliminate carbon emissions and eradicate poverty. The Sustainable Development Goals were relevant to more than just developing countries. Many developed countries also needed to address such issues as job precariousness, in particular for youth, women, migrants and informal workers.

49. The involvement of trade unions at the national, regional and global levels would promote the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The participation of trade unions would promote social protection, freedom of association and collective bargaining, which not only benefited workers but were also in the general interest. Trade unions stood ready to work in partnership with the United Nations and its Member States to achieve sustainable and inclusive development in order to leave no one behind.

50. **Ms. de La Rochère** (La Manif Pour Tous) said that surrogacy had emerged in recent years as a form of violence against women that must be eliminated in order to achieve target 2 of Sustainable Development Goal 5, on the elimination of violence against women and girls. Women in every continent were exploited and used as tools for reproductive purposes, which ran counter to the aims of achieving women's equality and the empowerment of women and girls as set out in the 2030 Agenda. All actors involved in such transactions profited from the commercialization of women's bodies except the surrogates themselves, who were poorly compensated, or received nothing at all if the agreement was supposedly voluntary, and suffered profound, long-term physical and psychological effects. Surrogacy involved control over another person, and as such constituted a form of slavery under article 1 of the Slavery Convention of 1926. Any individual or entity that used a woman for reproductive purposes deprived that woman of the full exercise of her freedom and her sexual and reproductive rights. Women who became surrogates were almost invariably living in poverty, had little education and had been placed under severe pressure. Many were also psychologically vulnerable. For those reasons, the exploitative practice of surrogacy must be prohibited.

51. **Ms. Díaz**, speaking on behalf of the major group for business and industry, said that business was a driver of innovation, economic development and employment and provided a source of financing. Strong and visionary business leadership was therefore essential to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The business sector would be guided by the Goals in its efforts to adapt to better manage risk, anticipate consumer demand, establish positions in growth markets, secure access to necessary resources and strengthen supply chains while moving the world towards sustainable and inclusive development. Forward-looking businesses were already working to have a meaningful impact on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda by developing a thorough understanding of the economic, environmental and social impact of their activities; adopting responsible business practices; respecting universal principles concerning human rights, equality and the environment; developing means of overcoming sustainability challenges; collaborating to develop a collective vision for sector transformation; working across sectors to help transform economic systems; disclosing data on their performance with respect to the Goals; and advocating for policy and financial mechanisms that would promote sustainable development.

52. Her major group supported the high-level political forum as a space for multi-stakeholder dialogue. It called on Member States and the United Nations system to use the Sustainable Development Goal framework as a catalyst for collaborative action through dialogue and partnership across sectors of society. Governments should place the Goals at the heart of policy development and decision-making and provide sound mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and reporting. It was also important to incentivize sustainable business models through clear policies, stable legal frameworks and the reduction of investment risk. In turn, the business organizations and networks comprising the major group would increase their efforts to raise awareness of the Goals; set relevant targets; support efforts by the private sector to incorporate sustainability principles in their decision-making and business models; work within and across sectors and supply chains to develop road maps for the transformation of sectors and systems; collaborate with Governments, civil society and other stakeholders to develop environmentally friendly, efficient and inclusive business practices; and advocate for finance

and policy mechanisms that would allow businesses to innovate and grow sustainably.

53. **Mr. Parmegiani** (Legião da Boa Vontade) said that the most effective way to overcome multidimensional poverty was through high-quality education. Achieving universal primary and secondary education would help to lift more than 420 million persons out of poverty, thereby reducing the number of global poor by more than half. It was vital to prioritize actions that would give future generations the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that would enable them to become partners in the implementation of sustainable development. His organization's approach to education did not focus on intellectual knowledge alone but also encouraged the desire for a more just, inclusive and peaceful world. That approach had led to increased social mobility and civic engagement among its beneficiaries in 150 vulnerable communities around the world.

54. **Ms. El Haitem**, speaking on behalf of volunteer groups, said that volunteerism could help to promote social cohesion and mutual understanding, build bridges between countries and communities and ensure that no one was left behind. Although international and national volunteers were working in every part of the world and on every issue related to sustainable development, they were often invisible and received little recognition. Beyond their daily contribution to achieving each of the Sustainable Development Goals, volunteers were at the heart of the global partnership for development and did much to mobilize citizens to work towards the Goals alongside Governments, civil society, the private sector and academia. Governments should therefore develop legislation and policies that promoted volunteerism, support volunteering schemes at the national level, measure the role and impact of volunteers and include information on the contribution of volunteers in their voluntary national reviews.

55. **Ms. Croso**, speaking on behalf of educational and academic entities, said that the implementation of the entire 2030 Agenda would be advanced through Sustainable Development Goal 4, on inclusive and quality education for all and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities. However, domestic budgets remained insufficient to achieve that Goal, and ODA had declined. As a result, it was crucial for donor countries to deliver on their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product as ODA.

56. Domestic resource mobilization for education should also be a priority. In that connection, it was a matter of concern that some countries had been reducing the funds allocated to education and had suspended the application of articles in their constitutions that protected financing for education. International efforts were needed to support domestic tax reforms and establish a globally inclusive intergovernmental body with the authority and resources to set and enforce fair global tax rules. When public education systems were not properly financed they were unable to deliver quality education, which gave rise to privatization, in some cases by for-profit actors.

57. The Sustainable Development Goals could only be achieved in highly democratic conditions. While the Goals had been developed in a participatory climate, civil society participation in the debate on education policy was now being shut down in many countries and education activists, in some cases students, were being criminalized.

58. Recent setbacks in the promotion of gender equality through education were a matter for concern. Some countries had even removed references to gender from their national and local education plans and curricula. The reasons for those reversals should be analysed and action taken to protect human rights.

59. **Ms. Lizarde**, speaking on behalf of the Financing for Development Civil Society Organizations Group, said that human rights, gender equality, women's rights and sustainability should be cross-cutting elements of the efforts to operationalize the Sustainable Development Goals and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. In that regard, the voices and knowledge of marginalized groups must be taken into account by including them in the dialogue on the Goals and in voluntary national review processes. Development policies and programmes could only be relevant if those who were the most vulnerable were seen as real partners. Civil society must therefore be consistently supported and funded. While Governments continued to hail the contributions of civil society, the political space for civil society and non-governmental organizations was diminishing at the national and global levels. In some cases, civil society organizations were even being criminalized.

60. The full and meaningful participation of women and the realization of women's human rights, gender equality and women's empowerment must be priorities in order to fulfil the commitments undertaken in the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. Efforts in that area must include joint action to end gender-based violence.

61. It would be possible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals with existing funds, provided that

those resources were redistributed in such a way as to make financing for development a priority. The 2030 Agenda was a call for States to take significant steps to end the cycle of inequality. Governments should respond to that call by taking concrete action as a matter of urgency.

62. **Ms. Sino** (Together 2030) said that while it was clear that many countries were committed to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, the pace of implementation of the 2030 Agenda must increase. Governments must now begin to implement the plans and policies that they had developed and to establish, strengthen or grow effective and inclusive institutions. Poverty eradication would only be achieved when prosperity was equitably shared, social protection was a reality and the environment was protected. Integrating and balancing the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development could not be achieved without the active engagement of all stakeholders.

63. Poverty eradication required approaches that sought to address its multiple dimensions and reduce inequality. That meant concrete policies, with adequate funding, to promote gender equality, children's rights and the inclusion of persons with disabilities, migrants, minority ethnic groups, young people and older persons. Investment in quality education for persons of all ages was also essential for sustainable development and the eradication of poverty.

64. Together 2030 was concerned that, despite their stated recognition of the integrated and indivisible nature of the Sustainable Development Goals, several Member States had reported on only a small number of the Goals in their voluntary national reviews. Those reviews should take into consideration progress and challenges related to all the Goals and their interlinkages. The thematic reviews of the Goals undertaken during the high-level political forum should not dictate or limit the scope of voluntary national reviews. It would be advisable for the Department of Economic and Social Affairs to review the voluntary national review guidelines and help States submitting reviews to comply with the guidance on reporting contained in the 2030 Agenda.

65. Civil society groups had demonstrated their ability to galvanize action and to voice collective values that were deeply rooted in communities but could be scaled up to guide partnerships and networks. Governments should therefore explore the role of civil society in developing subnational and national indicators and collecting data. They should also ensure that civil society organizations had the necessary funding to participate in those activities.

*The meeting rose at 4.50 p.m.*